

Senator Schumer Visits the Cornell Ag & Food Tech Park Site in Geneva

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by Linda McCandless

GENEVA, NY: Senator Charles E. Schumer toured the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station in Geneva, NY, on January 8, to learn how research expertise at the Station related to agriculture, food and biotechnology might attract prospective tenants to Cornell's Agriculture and Food Technology Park. The Park Corporation has obtained state and federal funding for initial development and is currently seeking federal funding for infrastructure development and incubator building construction, projected to cost \$3.9 million.

"I'm very optimistic about the future of the Park," said the Senator, after his hour-long tour. "The project has attracted some federal support and currently needs funding for infrastructure and buildings. It'll be a heavy lift, but I think we can do it."

"In upstate New York, we have to make the most of our strengths," said Schumer,



Plant pathologist Herb Aldwinckle (left) explained the process of gene transfer in the genetic engineering of disease-resistant apples to Senator Charles Schumer (right) during his tour of the Station on Tuesday, Jan. 8.

touring the Station for the first time. "We have great agriculture and great research. From what I have seen, this is one of the

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premier research facilities in the state, if not the whole country, and we need to translate that into more jobs for Ontario County. A research park is the ideal vision for what can be done here. I am going to redouble my efforts and go to bat for it."

The Senator said that New York is not able to attract industry to the state based on lowest costs, "but we do have the best thinkers and a well-trained labor supply." He said the economy of the next decade will be much more knowledge-based, and that upstate New York has much to offer in support of economic development.

Included among the research projects that Schumer reviewed with Cornell professors were next-generation "tools" for insect control with Dave Soderlund, genetic engineering of apples for disease resistance with plant pathologist Herb Aldwinckle, the Northeast Center for Food Entrepreneurship with Olga Padilla-Zakour, the grape and wine program with Thomas Henick-Kling, food safety with microbiologist Randy Worobo, and the Station's wine and food processing pilot plants.

Local officials were also invited to meet with Schumer. Attendees included Geneva City Manager Rich Rising; Mike Manikowski, executive director of the Ontario County Industrial Development Agency; Melanie Stepp, director of the Geneva Area Chamber of Commerce; Mary Luckern, Geneva Town Supervisor; Don Ninestine, Chairman of the Ontario County Board of Supervisors; and Jeff Astles, Ontario County Administrator.

"The Senator seemed to be sincerely impressed by what he saw here," said James E. Hunter, Station director. "The Experiment Station sits in the middle of a research triangle made up of Cornell University, Syracuse University, RIT and the University of Rochester. The Ag & Food Tech Park has the potential to generate jobs based on new and emerging technologies developed at these universities. The Senator is right: the Park is the ideal vision to capitalize on these strengths."

The 78-acre research park located adjacent to the Station will be for startup and established companies to develop technologies that complement existing research and extension programs of the Experiment Station, and will lead to goods and services that benefit agriculture and the consumer. The Park will help ensure the long-term viability of the Geneva Station and benefit the upstate economy in job creation and retention through technology transfer. Leaders from local and state

government, the private sector and Cornell University make up the board of directors of the Park Corporation. One of the biggest hurdles to the project was cleared when Governor Pataki signed legislation last November that authorized the state to convey the land to Cornell in exchange for nearby property owned by Cornell.

The project will be done in phases. Federal grants totaling almost \$900,000 have already been received for the project from HUD. An additional \$747,000 is anticipated through a US Economic Development Agency grant, including \$299,000 in a state match from the Empire State Development Corporation. These monies will be used for initial planning and design work, and limited infrastructure development.

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